

APPENDIX 5: SYMPOSIUM POSTER RULES AND GUIDELINES

The space allocated for each preproposal posters will be 3 ft by 3 ft (3'x3'). Each poster must be one solid piece that can attached by clips at the top corners. No pins can be used.

The preproposal posters should present content clearly, with the help of bullets and pictures.

The purpose of the preproposal posters is different from posters presented at scientific meetings. The CPBR preproposal posters are intended to interest company representatives and not to dazzle academic colleagues. The purpose of the poster is to attract matching funds from one or more companies. Company representatives are interested in the potential practical applications the proposed projects.

Your poster should:

- show the Title, PI name(s), University Name (not its logo);
- state the overall goal of the project;
- show the WHY of the research proposed -- the rationale;
- list the objectives; and
- list the expected results from a scientific and commercial point of view.
- Include photos of the PI and CoPIs so that other will recognize them to talk about their project.

Guidelines for Poster Design

The poster should communicate the proposed project with (1) a short title, (2) an introduction to the question(s) posed, (3) an overview of the anticipated answer(s) and (4) anticipated results, from both scientific and applied/commercial perspectives.

Candid advice:

CPBR organizers may unwittingly sandwich your poster between two posters that might appear infinitely more entertaining, so your poster should be interesting and visually appealing if you hope to attract viewers.

The trick to producing a great poster is to embrace the rough-draft process. Rough drafts are especially crucial in deciding whether you need to cut/add text or resize figures or fonts. You should produce a rough draft at least two weeks before it is due, and then bribe six friends, strangers, etc. to look at it when you are not present-- asking them to leave their anonymous suggestions on small Post-Its that you provide for them (code secretly so you can identify your critics and get even with them later). Ask them to comment on word count, style, idea flow, figure clarity, font size, spelling, etc. Note that you can print a miniature version of your poster on letter-sized paper to get a very rough sense of impending layout challenges.

Getting started:

A poster should be readable from a distance of six feet. Design your poster so that it has a good amount of white space, critical for a readable poster. Try to resist the inevitable temptation to use this white space to cram in more background information. A good rule is to have a minimum of 35% white space.

Try to keep your word count as low as possible to maximize the potential for viewers to actually read it. Aim for less than 250 words. This will be painfully difficult if you are attempting to fully document everything you plan to do, but posters with too many words may cause viewers to just read your figures or avoid your poster altogether.

What information to include:

Title: Should convey the "issue," the approach, and the system (organism); make it appealing in order to reel in passersby. [Maximum length: 1-2 lines.]

Introduction: Get your viewer interested while using the absolute minimum of background information and definitions; quickly place your issue in the context of the general experimental approach, and hint at why your proposed investigation is ideal for such research; give a clear hypothesis. [Maximum length: approximately 50 words.]

Objectives: Begin presentation of specific objectives that will more specifically address the hypothesis; provide figures that can stand on their own (*i.e.*, could convey some point to reader if viewers skipped all other sections, which they often do. [Maximum length: approximately 50 words, not counting figures.]

Conclusions: Describe expected results; why the results will be interesting; the relevance to real organisms in the real world; potential future directions. [Maximum length: approximately 100 words.]

Further information: There will be people who will want to know more about your research, and you can use this section to provide your e-mail address, your website address, and perhaps a URL where they can download a PDF version of the poster (edit so that URL is not blue and underlined). [Maximum length: approximately 20 words.] Also provide photos of yourself and Co-PIs so that others can find you to talk about your work.

Avoiding common mistakes:

- The number one mistake is to make your poster too long. Densely packed, high word-count posters are basically manuscripts pasted onto a wall, and attract only those viewers who are for some reason excited by manuscripts pasted onto walls. Posters with fewer than 250 words are ideal
- Format the title in "sentence case" (*e.g.*, "Font abuse in academia"). Do not use "title case" (*e.g.*, "Font Abuse in Academia ") or "all caps" (*e.g.*, "FONT ABUSE IN ACADEMIA"), which undermine naming conventions that depend on font formatting (*e.g.*, Latin binomials, genes, alleles). Another reason is that sentences formatted in these ways have been shown to require a few extra milliseconds for brains to interpret and those milliseconds can add up to be annoying.
- Use a non-serif font (*e.g.*, Helvetica or Arial) for title and headings and a serif font (*e.g.*, Palatino) for body text (serif-style fonts are much easier to read at smaller font sizes).
- The width of text boxes should be approximately 40 characters (on average, 11 words per line).
- Avoid blocks of text longer than 10 sentences.
- Whenever possible, use lists of sentences rather than blocks of text. Bullets!
- Use italics instead of underlining.
- When using acronyms and numbers (*e.g.*, ATP, 42) within the body of text, scale down the font size by a couple of points so that their sizes don't overpower the lowercase text, which they would do if you leave them at the default size. Use of "SMALL CAPS" will sometimes do the trick, but this effect varies with different fonts.
- Set line spacing of all text to be exactly 1, in case you have used super- or subscripted text.
- Because approximately 8% of males and 0.5% of females have some degree of color-vision deficiency, they see the world very differently. You can use the free tools at <http://www.vischeck.com> to test your color combinations.
- Complete the entire poster on a single platform. Choose Mac or PC and stick with it.

- Graph titles are not appropriate for laboratory write-ups and manuscripts, but they are great for posters. Having short, informative titles helps to lead the viewer more effortlessly through your poster.
- If you can add miniature illustrations to any of your graphs, do it! Visual additions can help attract and inform viewers more effectively than text alone. Tables benefit from this trick as well.
- Acronyms and other shorthand for genotypes, strains, and the like are great when talking to yourself but are not so great for communicating with others. On your graphs, use the English word and then add the strain, etc. in parenthesis (*e.g.*, "Control genotype (Col-0)").
- Y-axis labels aligned horizontally are much, much easier to read, and should be used whenever space allows. Viewers with hypertrophied, inflexible neck musculature will be especially appreciative.
- All graphs should have axis labels formatted in "Sentence case" (not in "Title Case" and not in "ALL CAPS").
- Don't give your graphs colored backgrounds, grid lines, or boxes. If your graphing program gives them to you automatically, get rid of them.
- Don't display two-dimensional data in 3-D. Three-dimensional graphs look adorable but obscure true differences among bar heights.
- Figures on graphs and photographs should be readable from 6 feet away.
- Don't incorporate "web" graphics without extreme caution, as any inherent quality and detail is lost the moment you enlarge it.
- If you include a photograph, add a thin gray or black border to make it more visually appealing. Just remember not to overpower the image with an overly thick line. Choose a line color that is subtly pleasing but barely noticeable to the viewer.
- Institutional logos are great on departmental letterhead and college athletic caps, but are somewhat inappropriate on posters. If you are unable to control yourself, minimize by hiding the logo (a small version) at the bottom of the poster.